

SUBCHAPTER C—THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301; 16 U.S.C. 460k, 664, 668dd, and 7151, 3901 *et seq.*; and Pub. L. 102-402, 106 Stat. 1961.

SOURCE: 41 FR 9166, Mar. 3, 1976, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Introduction

§ 25.11 Purpose of regulations.

(a) The regulations in this subchapter govern general administration of units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, public notice of changes in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy regarding Refuge System units, issuance of permits required on Refuge System units and other administrative aspects involving the management of various units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The regulations in this subchapter apply to areas of land and water held by the United States in fee title and to property interests in such land and water in less than fee, including but not limited to easements. For areas held in less than fee, the regulations in this subchapter apply only to the extent that the property interest held by the United States may be affected. The regulations in this subchapter also apply to and govern those areas of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal over which management responsibility has been transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Act of 1992 (Pub. L. 102-402, 106 Stat. 1961), before their establishment as a refuge and inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

(b) All national wildlife refuges are maintained for the primary purpose of developing a national program of wildlife and ecological conservation and rehabilitation. These refuges are established for the restoration, preservation, development and management of wildlife and wildlands habitat; for the protection and preservation of endangered or threatened species and their habitat; and for the management of wildlife and wildlands to obtain the maximum benefits from these resources.

[41 FR 9166, Mar. 3, 1976, as amended at 51 FR 7574, Mar. 5, 1986; 62 FR 47375, Sept. 9, 1997]

§ 25.12 What do these terms mean?

(a) As used in the rules and regulations in this subchapter:

Authorized official means any Federal, State or local official empowered to enforce provisions of this subchapter C.

Big game means large game animals, including moose, elk, caribou, reindeer, musk ox, deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, pronghorn, bear, and pecary, or such species as the separate States may so classify within their boundaries.

Compatibility determination means a written determination signed and dated by the Refuge Manager and Regional Chief, signifying that a proposed or existing use of a national wildlife refuge is a compatible use or is not a compatible use. The Director makes this delegation through the Regional Director.

Compatible use means a proposed or existing wildlife-dependent recreational use or any other use of a national wildlife refuge that, based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purpose(s) of the national wildlife refuge.

Comprehensive conservation plan means a document that describes the desired future conditions of a refuge or planning unit and provides long-range guidance and management direction to achieve the purposes of the refuge; helps fulfill the mission of the Refuge System; maintains and, where appropriate, restores the ecological integrity of each refuge and the Refuge System; helps achieve the goals of the National Wilderness Preservation System; and meets other mandates.

Conservation, and Management mean to sustain and, where appropriate, restore and enhance, healthy populations of fish, wildlife, and plants utilizing, in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws, methods and procedures associated with modern scientific resource programs. Such methods and procedures include, consistent with the provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee), protection, research, census, law enforcement, habitat management, propagation, live trapping and transplantation, and regulated taking.

Coordination area means a wildlife management area made available to a State by cooperative agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a State agency having control over wildlife resources pursuant to section 4 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 664 or by long-term leases or agreements pursuant to title III of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (7 U.S.C. 1010 *et seq.*). The States manage coordination areas but they are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The compatibility standard does not apply to coordination areas.

Director means the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the authorized representative of such official.

Easement means a less than fee interest in land or water acquired and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the purpose of maintaining fish and wildlife habitat.

Fish, Wildlife, and Fish and wildlife mean any member of the animal kingdom in a wild, unconfined state, whether alive or dead, including a part, product, egg, or offspring of the member.

Migratory bird means and refers to those species of birds listed under § 10.13 of this chapter.

National wildlife refuge, and Refuge mean a designated area of land, water, or an interest in land or water located within the National Wildlife Refuge System but does not include coordination areas.

National Wildlife Refuge System, and System mean all lands, waters, and interests therein administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as wildlife refuges, wildlife ranges, wildlife management areas, waterfowl production areas, coordination areas, and other areas for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife including those that are threatened with extinction as determined in writing by the Director or so directed by Presidential or Secretarial order. The determination by the Director may not be delegated.

National Wildlife Refuge System mission, and System mission mean to administer a national network of lands and

waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Nontoxic shot means steel shot or other shot approved pursuant to 50 CFR 20.134.

Plant means any member of the plant kingdom in a wild, unconfined state, including any plant community, seed, root, or other part of a plant.

Purpose(s) of the refuge means the purposes specified in or derived from the law, proclamation, executive order, agreement, public land order, donation document, or administrative memorandum establishing, authorizing, or expanding a national wildlife refuge, national wildlife refuge unit, or national wildlife refuge subunit. For refuges that encompass Congressionally designated wilderness, the purposes of the Wilderness Act are additional purposes of the wilderness portion of the refuge.

Refuge management activity means an activity conducted by the Service or a Service-authorized agent to fulfill one or more purposes of the national wildlife refuge, or the National Wildlife Refuge System mission. Service-authorized agents include contractors, cooperating agencies, cooperating associations, refuge support groups, and volunteers.

Refuge management economic activity means a refuge management activity on a national wildlife refuge which results in generation of a commodity which is or can be sold for income or revenue or traded for goods or services. Examples include: Farming, grazing, haying, timber harvesting, and trapping.

Regional Chief means the official in charge of the National Wildlife Refuge System within a Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the authorized representative of such official.

Refuge Manager means the official directly in charge of a national wildlife refuge or the authorized representative of such official. In the case of a national wildlife refuge complex, this refers to the official directly in charge of the complex.

Refuge use, and *Use of a refuge* mean a recreational use (including refuge actions associated with a recreational use or other general public use), refuge management economic activity, or other use of a national wildlife refuge by the public or other non-National Wildlife Refuge System entity.

Regional Director means the official in charge of a Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the authorized representative of such official.

Secretary means the Secretary of the Interior or the authorized representative of such official.

Service, *We*, and *Us* mean the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

Sound professional judgment means a finding, determination, or decision that is consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management and administration, available science and resources, and adherence to the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), and other applicable laws. Included in this finding, determination, or decision is a refuge manager's field experience and knowledge of the particular refuge's resources.

State, and *United States* mean one or more of the States of the United States, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and the territories and possessions of the United States.

Waterfowl production area means any wetland or pothole area acquired pursuant to section 4(c) of the amended Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act (72 Stat. 487; 16 U.S.C. 718d(c)), owned or controlled by the United States and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Wildlife-dependent recreational use, and *Wildlife-dependent recreation* mean a use of a national wildlife refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, or environmental education and interpretation. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), specifies that these are the six priority general public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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Wildlife management area means a general term used in describing a variety of areas that are managed for wildlife purposes which may be included in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

You means the public.

(b) Unless otherwise stated the definitions found in 50 CFR 10.12 also apply to all of subchapter C of this title 50.

[41 FR 9166, Mar. 3, 1976, as amended at 51 FR 7574, Mar. 5, 1986; 60 FR 62040, Dec. 4, 1995; 64 FR 14150, Mar. 24, 1999; 65 FR 62480, Oct. 18, 2000]

§ 25.13 Other applicable laws.

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to relieve a person from any other applicable requirements imposed by a local ordinance or by a statute or regulation of any State or of the United States.

Subpart B—Administrative Provisions

§ 25.21 When and how do we open and close areas of the National Wildlife Refuge System to public access and use or continue a use?

(a) Except as provided below, all areas included in the National Wildlife Refuge System are closed to public access until and unless we open the area for a use or uses in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee), the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460k–460k–4) and this subchapter C. See 50 CFR 36 for details on use and access restrictions, and the public participation and closure process established for Alaska national wildlife refuges. We may open an area by regulation, individual permit, or public notice, in accordance with § 25.31 of this subchapter.

(b) We may open a national wildlife refuge for any refuge use, or expand, renew, or extend an existing refuge use only after the Refuge Manager determines that it is a compatible use and not inconsistent with any applicable law. Lands subject to the patent restrictions imposed by Section 22(g) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act are subject to the compatibility requirements of Parts 25 and 26 of 50 CFR except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(1) We will complete compatibility determinations for uses of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act 22(g) lands in compliance with the following requirements:

(i) Refuge managers will work with 22(g) landowners in implementation of these regulations. The landowners should contact the Refuge Manager in advance of initiating a use and request a compatibility determination. After a compatibility determination is requested, refuge managers have no longer than ninety (90) days to complete the compatibility determination and notify the landowner of the finding by providing a copy of the compatibility determination or to inform the landowner of the specific reasons for delay. If a refuge manager believes that a finding of not compatible is likely, the Refuge Manager will notify the landowner prior to rendering a decision to encourage dialog on how the proposed use might be modified to be compatible.

(ii) Refuge managers will allow all uses proposed by 22(g) landowners when the Refuge Manager determines the use to be compatible with refuge purposes.

(iii) Compatibility determinations will include only evaluations of how the proposed use would affect the ability of the refuge to meet its mandated purposes. The National Wildlife Refuge System mission will not be considered in the evaluation. Refuge purposes will include both pre-ANILCA purposes and those established by ANILCA, so long as they do not conflict. If conflicts arise, ANILCA purposes will take precedence.

(iv) A determination that a use is not compatible may be appealed by the landowner to the Regional Director. The appeal must be submitted in writing within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the determination. The appeals process provided for in 50 CFR 36.41(i) (3) through (5) will apply.

(v) Compatibility determinations for proposed uses of 22(g) lands will only evaluate the effects of the use on the adjacent refuge lands, and the ability of that refuge to achieve its purposes, not on the effects of the proposed use to the 22(g) lands.

(vi) Compatibility determinations for 22(g) lands that a use is compatible are